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GOETHE'S "FAUST."

Goethe's "Faust" is by the unanimous consent of German critics the greatest work of their literature, the most characteristic product of the German mind. And because of this very national quality it is perhaps more difficult of just appreciation than many less excellent works of less individualized art.

In any study of this drama it is necessary to bear in mind *how* and *from what* it came to be. In the early part of the sixteenth century we hear of a certain charlatan named Faust who went about Germany swindling the credulous by fortune-telling, necromancy, and wonders of healing. He must have made a deep popular impression, for after a violent death, in 1540, he became almost immediately the nucleus around which gathered a great number of diabolical tales, which seemed to spring naturally from the gloomy fancy of this first century of German Protestantism, and in 1587, these legends were collected into a "Historia von D. Johann Faustus," written by an anonymous but zealous and mortally serious Lutheran.

This legend, consciously or unconsciously, makes Faust the counterpart, as he was the contemporary, of Luther.[1] Son of a peasant, he achieves great distinction at the University of Wittenberg, but falling into what the legend calls "a foolish and arrogant mind," he seeks by magic to deepen his knowledge of nature. A devil, Mephostophiles, be-

[1] Ch. Scherer, Faust-Buch, xxi.

comes his servant for twenty-four years, after which Faust is to belong to the evil one, and the treaty is signed with his blood. At first the devil amuses Faust and his professorial famulus, Wagner, with high living, then with sexual pleasures, then he whets his curiosity in regard to the unseen world. This tending to rouse remorse, Faust takes to mathematics for consolation, and after a time visits hell and the stars. Then he makes wide travels on earth, playing various magical pranks, in the course of which he shares in wild student revelry and conjures up the Grecian Helen, whom he takes as concubine, and has by her a soothsaying child. When the twenty-four years are passed, the devil carries away Faust, who ruefully points out the moral of his folly.

The point of this moral in the original Faust legend is directed against those humanists who were no more content with the obscurantism of Luther than they had been with that of Rome. In the reformed as in the unreformed Church a man must not seek to know beyond what is written, and above all he must eschew Helena and Greek ideals of life. Both the Luther of history and the Faust of the legend lecture on ancient culture, but Faust yields to it and Helena, while Luther marries after the christian ordinance; Luther clings to the Bible, Faust wishes to search beyond and behind it; Luther fights with the devil, Faust compacts with him. Both visit Rome where Luther is shocked, but Faust is amused and cynical. In short, this "Historia" is orthodoxy brandishing its theological birch at the freedom of human inquiry.

This remains essentially the characteristic of all prose versions of the Faust legend, for of these there were several in the next century. Some, to be sure, endeavor to connect him with the idolatry they attributed to Rome, and some introduce the episode of Helena by an abortive attempt of Faust to seduce a servant girl, a *motif* afterward used by Goethe. Meantime, however, the "Historia" had been translated into English and dramatized by Christopher Marlowe (1589), with no essential change in plot or theology.

After Marlowe's death (1603) a good deal of *diablerie* was added to his serious tragedy in order to tickle the ears of the groundlings. In this shape English actors brought the story back to Germany where it attained much popularity as a spectacular drama, in which the clown, representing the shrewd philistine common-sense of the middle class, plays the chief part, counterfeiting and parodying Faust and almost masking the original serious purport of the piece. But a still lower fall, and greater vulgarization, awaited the legend. It became a puppet play, a sort of "Punch and Judy Show," to amuse children, and as such it was seen by the boy Goethe.

Meanwhile, however, Lessing with critical insight had perceived the great possibilities of a subject that involved the deepest problems of man's moral existence. Dr. Faust, he wrote in 1759, "has a number of scenes in it that only a genius akin to Shakspere could have conceived." He even began, himself, a drama on the subject, though of this Goethe was probably ignorant. But what appealed to Lessing appealed equally, and perhaps more forcibly, to Goethe, for there were many things in the young man's career that might make him feel allied to the Faust whom he discerned behind the tinsel of the puppet-play. If Faust had explored all the branches of knowledge and found satisfaction in none, Goethe in his Leipzig years had been disappointed in his legal and metaphysical studies, of which latter "he thought he knew about as much as the teacher himself." Nor was he better satisfied with his critical instructors. "What I wanted," he writes, "was a standard of judgment, and that no one seemed to possess." Then in Frankfort he had had a touch of speculative theology through Frau von Klettenberg, and with it had been mixed a certain amount of pietistic alchemy and spirit-lore, which might fascinate but could not satisfy; and to all these we must add the powerful solvent of Rousseau's social philosophy. That he found in his personal student experience suggestions of Faust was not remarkable. He had a cynical friend,

Behrisch, who, to judge from a letter, seems to have counselled him to play Faust's part toward a Leipzig Gretchen; but the subject was more probably brought home to him by a sympathetic study of Paracelsus, the sixteenth century physician, in whom Goethe found the connecting link between Faust and himself.

Now the moment Goethe saw Faust in himself, the necessity of giving this subject literary expression became imperative to him. "Faust," as he would treat the subject, would contain his views of man, of destiny, of ethics, and of the spiritual world. It would be his testament to mankind. But there was a vast scope of intellectual and moral development that separated the young man who went to Strassburg in 1770, hiding his cherished scheme from the critical and captious Herder, from the venerable octogenarian who at eighty-two sealed the manuscript of the concluding part of what had been truly the work of his life, and wrote of it to Reinhard: "Await no finality. The last-solved problem of the history of the world and of mankind discloses immediately a new one to be solved." Incompleteness lay in the nature of the task, nor could we expect to find either in matter or form a unity of composition or plan. Much is unexplained, more is left without a clearly obvious purpose, and the sequence of some scenes offers insuperable chronological difficulties. As Scherer has said: "The whole plan is not carried out. Important scenes, which Goethe had proposed are wanting. Inequalities were not avoided. It is only when looked at in general and from a distance that the poem has unity, somewhat as the Homeric epics, or the "Nibelungenlied," or the "Gudrun." Just as the work of various hands in the broad popular epics produced only a partly unified whole, or hid and swelled the original whole, so here, this work of sixty years, long continued, interrupted, and subject to the most various moods, could not attain a true inner uniformity and completeness. While in the great mass of the First Part we admire the sure, bold hand of the young or mature artist, the Second offers, beside as-

tonishingly successful portions, weaker parts also, in which the hand of the aged master seems to tremble."

Goethe was entirely conscious of this. He calls it, in writing to Schiller, his "tragelaph," or goat-stag, a fantastic creature, and again he speaks of it as a "rhapsodical drama." In 1797 he found some of the early prose scenes "quite intolerable in their naturalness," and proposed to put them into rhyme, which he did in every case but one.

In its general outlines the genesis of the work seems to have been somewhat this.[1] The first idea of the drama, he tells us, came to him in 1769. It is not probable that he began writing on it till 1773, though some prose scenes may date back to the preceding year. It was then known among his friends that he was engaged on the work and they evidently expected something to out-herod "Götz" in dramatic heresy of Storm and Stress.[2] It continued to be his favorite theme till he went to Weimar in 1775. But he worked on isolated scenes only, and probably had not thought out their connection. This seems the more likely as we study the character of a copy made from Goethe's manuscript soon after he went to Weimar by a lady of the court, Luise von Göchhausen, which was discovered in 1887, and has since been published by the distinguished Goethe scholar, Erich Schmid.

We have here twenty scenes of mingled prose and verse giving the episode of Gretchen substantially as we now find it, but with a fragmentary introduction, from which still unfinished scenes were probably withheld, for it does not seem that Goethe added materially to "Faust" between his coming to Weimar, in 1775, and the eve of his return from Italy, in 1788, when, writing to Karl August from Rome, he announces that he "has made the plan of Faust," having "rediscovered the thread" and written a new

[1] Thomas, Goethe's Faust, Vol. I., Introduction, gives a condensed statement of the present state of criticism on the First Part of Faust.

[2] "Schick' mir dafür den Dr. Faust, Sobald dein Kopf ihn ausgebraust," writes Gotter to Goethe in July, 1773.

scene, the "Witches' Kitchen," as an attempt to bridge that chasm between the early portions and the Gretchen episode which existed in the Göchhausen stage of the drama. But, as Thomas observes, "Goethe will find that the old thread is worthless and that he must discover a new one." This seems to have dampened his ardor once more. Little was done in 1789, and only the promise of "Faust" for a complete edition of his works led him to publish it as "A Fragment" in 1790, from which no doubt he still kept back unfinished scenes.

The date will explain why the Fragment attracted comparatively little attention. All eyes were turned to France in this second year of the Revolution. Schiller however saw in it the "torso of a Hercules," and repeatedly urged Goethe to resume his work on it, though without response until June, 1797, when the elder poet writes: "Our ballad study has led me again to this misty, cloudy path," so that he is prepared to console himself for his disappointment in regard to a proposed Italian journey, in that "world of symbol, idea, and fog." To this end he tells Schiller that he has planned to finish up what is already begun and "fit it to what has been printed." He proposes, he says, "to take things easily in this barbarous composition, striving to touch, rather than to satisfy the highest demands. "The whole," he is convinced, "will always remain a fragment," for Goethe was now in his most classical period, and more distant from the essentially Teutonic conception of the then existing scenes than he became after Schiller's death.

It is therefore no wonder that "Faust" progressed slowly, and that the poet turned from ordering the earlier portions to working on the hint of the old legend that connected Faust with Helena, or, as it would immediately present itself to Goethe's mind, the Teutonic with the Hellenic spirit. But, as appears from the Correspondence of 1800, he had reserved the development of this idea for a second part. It was not till 1808 that the First Part appeared in its present form, final but still incomplete and incongruous. This

incongruity will best appear if we follow the course of its twenty-five scenes.

The poem opens with a prelude in which a Poet, a Manager, and a Merry-Andrew, exchange their views on the conditions of the German stage and of theatrical success. We have then a Prologue in Heaven, where God and the devil are introduced with the naïveté of Hans Sachs. In this Prologue we are told, on the very highest authority, that Faust is God's servant. His service is indeed momentarily "confused," but God will bring him in due time to "clearness." Still, since man is prone to err as long as he strives, God is willing that Mephistopheles should tempt him if he will. Thus the reader or auditor is assured at the very outset that Faust will be saved. Indeed Goethe's Mephistopheles tells the attentive reader that he cares less to win Faust's soul than to prove that he is right in his materialistic and pessimistic view of life. The point of interest is therefore no longer: What will become of Faust?, but how this "clearness" is to come to him; and the action is thus raised wholly out of the sphere of Marlowe's tragedy of sin and damnation to a serener ethical plane. But the reader should not forget that this Prologue was written after Goethe himself had come to greater clearness about his intentions than when most of the First Part was composed.

The play opens with Faust in his study. He is apparently an old man though he has been professor but ten years. He has studied every profession and is profoundly discouraged at the narrow scope of the human mind. He even contemplates suicide; for magic, though it had enabled him to conjure the spirit world, had not given him power to comprehend or control it. The carols of Easter morning bring him back to a healthier frame of mind, and we next find him with his famulus, the narrowly contented scholar Wagner, who, like Hanswurst in the earlier drama, is the philistine antitype of Faust, mingling with the people on a spring holiday, but escaping at length from what he knows to be their unmerited gratitude for his medical aid in the pestilence.

As they walk together and Faust speaks of his longings, they are met by a black dog whom Faust takes to his study, where after some hocus-pocus the dog reveals himself as the diabolical spirit Mephistopheles, for the moment dressed as a wandering scholar, who announces himself as "a part of that force which always wills the ill and always works the good," or again as "the spirit that denies," whose "element is what you call sin, destruction, evil," and that, because "all that exists is worthy of perishing." In so far, then, Mephistopheles is a sort of Nihilist. His attendant spirits lull Faust to sleep in exquisite dimeters and on his awaking he has become disposed to sign a compact by which, if the spirit can satisfy him, he may have him. "When on an idler's bed I stretch myself in quiet, There let at once my record end. Canst thou with lying flattery rule me, Until self-pleased myself I see, — Canst thou with rich enjoyment fool me, Let that day be the last for me."[1] But this, as appears from the Prologue, means nothing more than that he will then be driven to admit that Mephistopheles' pessimism is justified. Faust signs the compact with his blood, and after Mephistopheles has given cynical advice to a young scholar on his choice of a profession, he begins his task by introducing his master to an orgy of student debauchery in Auerbach's wine cellar in Leipzig.

The scene that follows is vivid and, alas, not untrue to student nature, though the reader will sympathize with Faust in the disgust it aroused in him. He was not to be satisfied with such chaff. It lay in the natural sequence of things that the obsequious devil should now shift from gluttony to lust. But at this point Goethe found a personal experience to embody, and thus there was developed a drama within a drama that so outgrew its subordinate place as to seem to many the central point of the entire work, as it is of the First Part. It is the Gretchen episode that for a time absorbs the poet's entire interest.

[1] The metrical citations of the First Part are from Taylor's translation.

It was essential for the drama that Faust should not wholly reject these untried attractions of sensual love. But in yielding he must carry our sympathy with him, since the Prologue has told us, what indeed must from the first have been clear, in the very nature of the case and from the character of the author, that Faust is to be brought by his trials to "clearness" and not to moral ruin. This Goethe sought to accomplish by the "Witches' Kitchen," where a rejuvenating potion is given to Faust, which, as Mephistopheles tells the spectators aside, is a love potion also. Helena, the ideal of womanly beauty, is shown him in a glass and "with this drink in his veins, he shall soon see Helena in every woman." But, after all, this attempt to enlist our sympathy for Faust the seducer, with his rather childish "I must," was not, perhaps could hardly be, successful, and it was probably the consciousness of this that made Goethe speak so slightingly of the work at this stage in letters to Schiller. As for the Apes' mysterious talk in this scene of the "Witches' Kitchen," Goethe afterward spoke of it as "dramatic-humoristic nonsense," and barring the "humorous," we may take his word for it. It is wholly impertinent to the main action of the play.

With scene vii. and Gretchen we pass into a quite different atmosphere. Mephistopheles does little more than a cynical friend might do. The action is now no longer guided by the old play or puppet-show but by Goethe's recollections of Leipzig and Sesenheim. It is the theme treated already in "Götz," in "Clavigo," in "Egmont," the love of a girl of lower culture and station for a man socially and intellectually her superior, though morally, if not inferior, at least more complex. The whole episode, in its delineation of character, and in its tragic development, is a masterpiece hardly equalled, save by Shakspere, in the range of literature. It is thoroughly popular, universally comprehensible, and thus it fixed itself immediately in the public mind as *the* Faust drama, while the higher unity of the whole was perceived only by the thoughtful few.

The episode, for such it is essentially, though artistically complete in itself, opens with the meeting of Faust and Gretchen as she leaves the church. With the boldness of a gallant adventurer he offers her his escort, which she refuses as a girl of the middle class might do, resolutely, but without indignation, and in a language that marks at the very outset her lack of culture. Here and throughout she is a girl of the people. She has the faults common to her class in Germany and elsewhere; she is inclined to sentimentality, fond of dress and ornament, but yet she is industrious, neat, and with the motherly instinct natural in a simple child of nature. Faust, thanks we must suppose rather to the witch's potion than to any peculiar elective affinity between his nature and hers, is fascinated by her and demands Mephistopheles' aid to win her. But his diabolical arts would fail here. "I have no power over souls so green," he says contemptuously, while the facile Faust thinks: "had he but seven hours he could win her by his own persuasion," and would have no need of the devil. Mephistopheles is pledged to help him but, save for certain buried treasures which he unearths, he resorts only to ordinary means of seduction. We have left for the moment mediæval witchcraft for modern naturalism.

The next scene (viii.) takes us to Gretchen's "small but neatly kept chamber," where, as she braids her hair, she muses, a little flattered by the attentions of a gallant, who "would not have been so bold if he had not been of noble family." Presently she goes out, and Mephistopheles nurses Faust's passion by bringing him to this sanctuary of maidenhood where each feels and speaks according to his nature, Faust as a lover, Mephistopheles as a cynical sensualist. They leave a casket of jewelry in her clothes-press. Gretchen returns and with the instinct of innocence notes the sultry air, and feels a dim foreboding. She finds the casket and, without much questioning whence it came, she is carried away by the contents. She decks herself with the ornaments and talks the while with a childlike pathos of the dis-

advantages of a poor girl in this worldly world. "To gold still tends, On gold depends, All, all! Alas! we poor."

The ground being thus prepared, the willing go-between is found in the shape of neighbor Martha, whose prudent flirtation with the cautious Mephistopheles forms a powerful foil in the ardent passion of Faust and the budding love of Gretchen. Tender feelings that might purify Faust's love are for the moment shipwrecked on the cynical promptings of his ally (xi.) In Martha's garden they meet, and Faust wins the promise of her love in two exquisite scenes (xii., xiii.), skillfully set off by the recurring bits of dialogue between Martha and Mephistopheles, as each couple in turn is brought before the audience.

There follows a scene (xiv.) which in its present place involves a contradiction, when viewed in the light of the last scene of the Second Part. Originally it had been placed much later and after Gretchen had long given all she had to give. In his youth and up to the period of his union with Schiller, Goethe was willing to let Faust's relation to Gretchen continue until broken by an unwelcome interruption. In old age, he found symbolical use for Gretchen and wished to make her appear as one: "Who had forgot herself but once, Who dreamed not that she erred." It then became necessary to cancel this scene or change its place, which leaves it, as is usual in such revisions, out of place. This scene is entitled "Forest and Cavern," and shows Faust in a gloomy mood. He has torn himself away from Gretchen, as the boy Goethe is said to have done from his first unhappy passion, and sought refuge in the bosom of nature. Now such moods are not apt to intervene between the promise and the fulfillment of love, and Mephistopheles in painting the longing of the deserted Gretchen has an easy victory, hardly requiring the consummate skill with which he presents his temptation. In its original place and with the original assumption of a prolonged relation, the scene would have had a far deeper note of moral tragedy.

After an exquisite song in which Gretchen expresses her

love-longing (xv.) there follows a second scene in Martha's garden where Gretchen naïvely questions Faust of his religious faith and gets an answer which is the poetry of pantheism, and wholly outside the sphere of her intellect. It is interesting to see how clearly in a few speeches Goethe has placed the religious instinct in contrast to speculative theology, neither comprehending the other, the lower yielding to the higher, but not without moral loss. Gretchen instinctively shrinks from Mephistopheles, but for Faust she will give her mother a sleeping potion, a poison with which Mephistopheles has provided him, that they may love undisturbed; for in him whom she loves the simple Gretchen can conceive no harm.

No long interval can intervene between the first and second "Garden" scenes (xii., xvi.), for the "Forest and Cavern" (xiv.) was apparently intended to represent no more than such an excursion as the boy Goethe was wont to make with his tutor in Frankfort, as he has told us in "Wahrheit and Dichtung." The first interview (xii.) had been in the time of the flowering daisies, perhaps in April, for it must have been after Easter and before May 1st, the Walpurgis-Night that is to follow.[1] But in the scene that follows the second meeting, "At the Fountain", (xvii.), Gretchen has already fallen. Her prayer in the "Donjon" scene (xviii.) shows that she is conscious of approaching motherhood and is already abandoned, and when her brother Valentin is introduced and killed by Faust in scene xix. her condition has become common talk; yet this, as we learn from that very scene, was on the 29th of April.

Then, too, it will be noted that in no one of these scenes is the death of Gretchen's mother from the potion mentioned or assumed, or indeed reconcilable with what is said, though if, as is stated in the Second Part, Gretchen erred but once,

[1] This cannot be the Walpurgis-Night of the next year because Valentin is killed two days before the Walpurgis and also before Gretchen's child is born, but, as will appear, a satisfactory chronology has become hopeless. How this came about is clearly stated by Thomas, l. c. 324.

this death must have already taken place and it is, in fact, mentioned in the "Cathedral Scene" (xx.) that follows. All this has come, like the previous trouble with "Forest and Cavern" (xiv.) from the changed conception of Faust's connection with Gretchen, at first conceived as a lasting liaison in which the mother's death is to be caused by the growing recklessness of Gretchen's absorbing passion, but afterward as a momentary aberration, as of a magnetic needle that turned immediately back to its celestial pole.

The scenes "At the Fountain" and "Donjon" (xvii., xviii.) show first how sin in Gretchen's gentle nature fills the heart with tender and pathetic sympathy for fellow-sinners, then the penitent turns in impassioned prayer to the sorrow-laden Virgin-Mother, her soul recovering its purity and gaining infinite depth by its acquaintance with sorrow and pain. This scene, even though originally intended to allude to Gretchen's repentance for her mother's death and afterward changed in its intention, might surely imply that Gretchen was abandoned. She speaks in the preceding scene (xvii.) of Faust in the past tense, and indeed it is difficult to conceive that such feelings as she utters there could coexist with their former relation. But yet in "Night" (xix.), the scene that follows these, Faust is disturbed at the thought of going to see his mistress (*Buhle*) without a gift, and Gretchen must surely be meant.

It was important to Mephistopheles' purpose, however, that Faust should not be present at the crisis that was now approaching in Gretchen's fate. Hence Valentin, her brother, was introduced, first that by publicly proclaiming her fault he might plunge her deeper into purifying shame; second that by killing him and so depriving her of the only relative to whom she could look for help, Faust might intensify his guilt and the final catastrophe be justified; and, lastly, that in order to escape from the consequences of this murder, Faust might be compelled to leave the city and therefore to abandon Gretchen. "Night," then, belongs to an earlier plan than the two preceding scenes. And the con-

ceptions were never satisfactorily reconciled. If Faust had already abandoned Gretchen, as those scenes presuppose, the Valentin episode would be unnecessary, and the "Cathedral Scene" which succeeds might appropriately follow Gretchen's prayer (xviii.). But the character of Valentin has a vigor and clearness of conception that gives enduring life.

The "Cathedral Scene" (xx.) with its funeral sequence, *Dies Irae*, was originally headed "Obsequies of Gretchen's Mother." As the verses of the Judgment Hymn resound in the penitent's ear, an evil spirit whispers to Gretchen thoughts of despair, and she falls fainting in the passion of her purgation, at the thought that "the glorified turn their faces from her." This scene in its present position must fall in the Autumn, though, if Gretchen "erred but once" and this single error was the occasion of her mother's death, it must have taken place in April, and such is the assumption of the scene that immediately follows.

For the tension of the tragedy, which has here become intense, is now broken by the witches' carnival on Walpurgis Night (May 1st). One may justify the introduction of such a scene on ironical grounds, as Heine does in the case of Shakspere's clowns, but the scene is too long for this purpose, and wholly foreign matter dealing with the personal and literary controversies of the time has been wantonly intruded in "Oberon's Wedding." Nothing connects the traditional Faust with the Walpurgis Carnival, though he was brought by the legend to the Brocken, the peak of the Harz on which it took place. But this is purely indifferent. We are here transferred from the modern realism of the Gretchen episode to the mediæval atmosphere of the early scenes, and the Faust who meets us here, singing with will-o'-the-wisps, dancing with witches, enjoying the wild rout and Rabelaisian wit, is not the Faust who loved Gretchen nor he who killed Valentin. This, too, like the "Witches' Kitchen" was "dramatic-humorous nonsense," we have Goethe's word for it, and here the humor is not lacking, if

one does not insist too anxiously on sense. Goethe wrote it in 1800, and as late as 1830 he still rejoiced in it. "Really," he said to Falk, "one ought to play the joke oftener in one's youth and give 'em such bits (*Brocken*) as the Brocken."

An interruption in the course of the drama was justified, for fate was hurrying it to a close. We are brought back to the tragic mood by the scene named "Dreary Day." Some interval has elapsed, Faust has not seen Gretchen again, and is now far away when startled by the news, which comes to him we know not whence,[1] that Gretchen has been a wretched outcast and is now an accused prisoner, or rather, as appears later, convicted of infanticide and destined to execution. This is one of those prose scenes that Goethe in 1798 had found "intolerable in comparison with the rest" and had not succeeded in versifying. It is strong, but the extravagance of the language smacks of "Storm and Stress." Faust insists on being taken to her cell that they may attempt her rescue, and on magic horses they urge their nightly flight, while beneath a gallows, witches soar and sweep, bow and bend, scatter, devote and doom.

And so we are brought to the climax of Gretchen's prison cell. Her mind is shaken by grief and the misery of her lot. Her tragic madness suggests Ophelia's and perhaps surpasses its model. Faust finds her lying on the straw, singing words of an old song, which she turns to apply to her dead child. She takes her lover for her jailer and pleads pathetically with him. Now she asks for her child, now imagines hell beneath her prison. At last she recognizes Faust and half-incoherently recalls the course of their love. She clings to him with tenderest passion, but she will not fly, "it is so wretched to beg, and with a bad conscience beside." Suddenly she remembers that the child is drowned and cries to Faust to haste to save it for it still quivers, or she tells him how she will be buried with her mother and

[1] It had been proposed to reveal it to him on the Brocken, but the intention was not realized.

brother, a little aside, the baby on her right breast, alone, for she can no longer feel a perfect sympathy even with her lover.

"It seems as though you repelled me," she cries, "and yet 't is you, and you look so kind and good." This is noteworthy. She cannot unite herself with Faust again because she has gone through a stage of spiritual development that separates her from him. When at the close of the Second Part, Gretchen is bidden to rise to higher regions that if Faust dimly comprehend her, he may follow, the clue is given to the reason why she has this feeling here. And thus every tragic element is combined to deepen Faust's agony. At last Mephistopheles warns him that day is dawning. Gretchen shrinks in terror from that unspiritual spirit, and when Faust, a last time, urges her to fly, she commits herself rather to the judgment of God, her last breath a prayer, and the last quiver of life a shudder for her lover. "She is judged," says Mephistopheles. But Faust is not to be left in this error. A voice from above proclaims: "Is saved," and, as her appealing voice, calling him, dies away, Mephistopheles, snatching Faust to his side, vanishes.

So closes the First Part and with it the microcosmic portion of Faust's experience, which has come to take a larger place than its function in the general plan would make artistically justifiable. But rules of proportion, and indeed of formal criticism in general, cannot be applied to Faust as a whole. What has given the First Part its pre-eminent place in German literature, at least in the popular consciousness, is in part the gnomic wisdom of Mephistopheles, which takes up and embodies a view of the world and of life which all recognize and too many share; but, more even than that, it is the unique portrayal of guilty innocence and betrayed simplicity in the drama of Gretchen's fall and purgation through suffering.

The Second Part of "Faust," in bringing us to the greater world and its wider activities, follows more closely in its outline the old legend. Magic resumes its sway and the whole becomes more spectacular and operatic. A thread of

esoteric meaning, or rather, perhaps, many threads, can be traced through all, now plainly in sight, now masked almost completely from view; sometimes because they deal with a state of feeling and political conditions that are no longer present to our minds, sometimes because various allegorical interpretations run for a time side by side and at last become inextricably involved, sometimes too because, as occasionally in the First Part, the poet with wanton irony mystifies his readers.

To follow out and interpret, as far as may be, the endless complications of these parabolical types and personifications is the duty of special commentators of whom there is no lack, for during the last twenty years and more, critical attention has been directed in an increasing measure to the "Faust" as a whole, to its ethical and philosophical, rather than to its literary and æsthetic content. Nor will this be thought unnatural when it is considered that the present generation of readers is losing that delicate sense of form that finds its best illustration in the Germans, Heine and Platen, and their French contemporaries, Gautier, Flaubert, and the Parnassians. Men care little to-day for art for art's sake. The true is in danger of being divorced from the beautiful, a danger indicated by the overshadowing position of Ibsen. It is precisely the age in which we should look for a revival of interest in "Faust" as a whole, as distinct from the artistically admirable episodes of Gretchen and Helena.

No analysis of the Second Part of "Faust" can bring out its manifold beauties, but it is necessary to recall the sequence or rather succession of scenes to justify any judgment of the drama as a work of art, in which all the parts, to be fitly joined together, must be in due proportion to each other and to the whole.

The close of the tragedy of Gretchen should have left Faust crushed with guilty despair. The Second Part finds him "bedded on flowery turf, tired, restless, seeking sleep," while graceful little spirits, accompanied by Æolian harps, sing soothing strains. The purpose of their song is "to

calm the fierce struggle of the heart, to remove the bitter glowing arrows of reproach and purify his breast from the horror it has experienced." They will "bathe him in dew from Lethe's flood and give him back to holy light." Thus Faust is prepared to enter on the new experiences of the Second Part, and at the same time it is made very clear that, to Goethe, action, not penitential brooding, is to be the means by which Faust is to overgrow the wounds of his soul's fault and be brought to "clearness." And so we are already prepared to find that, in submitting Gretchen to Faust, Mephistopheles has realized his own saying, he has "willed the ill and wrought the good." Faust is stronger, wiser, deeper, for having known Gretchen, but she is to him as the *roses d'antan*, and he looks forward, not back, until at the very close, the circle of his life is joined and the beginning meets the end. Such seems to be the ethical import of the introductory scene, darkened a little toward the close by interwoven allusions to Goethe's theory of colors. A considerable part of this prelude, as indeed of the whole Second Part, is operatic in character.

The spectator is now transported to the palace of an Emperor, who is here represented as a frivolous and incompetent ruler, perhaps that he may the more require the aid of Faust's magic arts, and the more freely grant him scope for future activity. But it is hard to win much interest for services that cost only the wave of a magician's wand and serve only to atone for the results of incompetence. Hence the scenes at the imperial court, here and in the Fourth Act, are æsthetically the least pleasing.

We learn first that extravagance has brought want in all quarters of the empire. Then Mephistopheles, who has introduced himself as court-fool, offers to relieve the embarrassment by means of countless buried treasures, the property of the crown. But from the question how he is to recover them the emperor turns gladly to a carnival which in the main is also of Mephistopheles' preparation. Commentators say that the buried treasure is undiscovered know-

ledge, but it is difficult to carry the allegory through in this sense.

In the course of the operatic revels a chariot appears bearing Faust as Plutus, god of material, and here at least of intellectual, wealth, driven by a youth who seems to allegorize the ideal use of these gifts, but who is also intended, as Goethe told Eckermann, to represent Faust's future son Euphorion, though why this should be is not clear. Mephistopheles follows them as Avarice. Together they come to the throne of Pan, the emperor, who in this allegorical capacity signs a treasury note, which when multiplied indefinitely gives a paper currency secured by yet undiscovered wealth. Perhaps this may stand for those metaphysical speculations based on the unknowable in which many Germans were then rejoicing as in an intellectual fool's paradise. Beside this, however, there is a direct satire on the use and abuse of paper money itself, especially toward the close of the episode.

Pleased with his imaginary riches, the emperor wishes to be amused. He demands that Helena and Paris, types of ideal man and womanhood, be conjured up before him. That is, wealth, material and intellectual, arouses the desire for culture, of which Greek culture is the universal type and model. But over this classic realm of the beautiful Mephistopheles, the demon of an ascetic and supernatural religion, has no power. He turns to Faust and bids him descend to the Mothers who dwell in the nether world, the incomprehensible creators of the ideal. Yet Mephistopheles, though he cannot seek the ideal himself, can give Faust a key to guide him; and this key grows in his hand, burns bright, and gives new strength and courage, though when Faust vanishes with it Mephistopheles utters a sneering doubt whether he will ever return from his quest. The Key seems to be enthusiasm, by which alone the ideal is revealed, but which may become destructive unless he who holds it in his hand stand firm on reality.

A scene of strong satire on the petty German courts now

intervenes to give space for Faust's search, but he returns at length with power to summon the Trojan Paris, on whom the courtiers comment each after his kind. Helena then appears. She does not attract Mephistopheles, for Greek beauty is not, like this demon of Northern fancy, the sensuous negation of mediæval asceticism, but is outside of it and incomprehensible to it. Nor can the courtiers comprehend her charm. But Faust's past life has attuned his mind to thrill responsive to this new vision of beauty. With overwhelmed longing he endeavors to grasp it, crying: "Whoe'er has seen her, cannot bear her loss." But the Greek spirit is still too foreign for his Teutonic mind. She vanishes, and he lies fainting, to be borne away by Mephistopheles. The close of this first act, the "Key", the "Mothers," and "Helena," is all that is essential to the ethical thesis of "Faust."

The Second Act opens in Faust's study, where he still lies in a swoon while the conversation of Mephistopheles with a famulus, with Wagner, now a famous professor and physicist, and with a skeptical bachelor, once the student whom Mephistopheles had counselled, brings before us the conceptions of metaphysics, æsthetics, and ideal culture that might be contending in Faust's mind; all not without pointed satire at the conceited self-assurance of Young Germany and the metaphysicians of 1820

Wagner has made chemically an Homunculus, but since he cannot give his little man a body, he must stay sealed in the flask where he was created. This Homunculus is clearly the artificial conception of the ideal that comes not from the experience of life but from study. It, too, as well as Faust, has Greek aspirations and therefore it seeks to draw its parent to classic ground. Suddenly it escapes from Wagner's hand, hovers over the head of Faust and reveals the course of the sleeper's mind as his soul gradually accustoms itself to the Greek view of life and happiness, the view, it may be added, of Goethe's "Roman Elegies." But the Homunculus is a student's creation, and the classical

life that he seeks is found in the shadowy visions of Pharsalia's Walpurgis-Night, whither he counsels that Faust be taken. Of this classic carnival Mephistopheles has heard nothing. "How should you?" says Homunculus. "You know romantic ghosts alone. A genuine ghost, that must be classic, too." Though Mephistopheles dreads the Greeks who "entice man's breast to bright sins, so that ours seem gloomy beside them", yet the temptation of Thessalian witches overcomes his repulsion, and they all follow the Homunculus, dependent, as Mephistopheles pregnantly observes, "on creatures we ourselves have made."

The Classical Walpurgis-Night has little direct connection with the course of Faust's development. Seeking everywhere Helena, he is borne, as one insane, to Mantho for his cure, but she "loves the man who seeks the unattainable", and directs him to Persephoneia's realm. Of this journey, however, we hear no more, nor is it made clear by what means Helena is brought to the upper world. But, aside from this, the scene serves a useful purpose in bringing the reader or spectator to a classical frame of mind by the introduction of the various ideals of antiquity that are here brought before him. Mephistopheles, counselled by the Sphinx and teased by the Lamiæ, feels first at home with the personified ugliness of the Phorkyades, while Homunculus, in his zeal to obtain incorporation, loses himself among the philosophers, to be dashed to pieces at last against Galatea's throne, who is herself that realized ideal of which he was the scholar's reflection. To follow out these allegorical threads in all their twisted windings would perhaps go beyond the poet's intention, for he has clearly laid them aside himself to weave into this scene an allegorized debate between Anaxagoras and Thales, the former representing those who held the volcanic origin of the earth and opposed the investigations of the "Neptunists", among whom Goethe, who speaks here under Thales' mask, reckoned himself a leader. And so important does this second allegory become in the mind of the poet that he al-

lows the Classical Walpurgis-Night to close with an operatic scene on the Ægean Sea, where sirens, nereids, and tritons, with Nereus, Proteus, and Thales, sing the praises of the sea and the triumph of the sea-born Galatea, while we are left uncertain how or why Helena is brought to the upper world.

For the opening of the Third Act finds her with a chorus of captured Trojan women before Menelaus' palace in Sparta, anxiously veiling from her own eyes the memory of all that has intervened since Paris carried her away, as though, perhaps, this were a condition of her return from the under world. She thinks herself just landed, sent before by Menelaus to prepare a sacrifice. With her is Mephistopheles, disguised as Phorkyas, type of ugliness, a servile contrast to Helena's queenly beauty and bearing. Through Phorkyas she learns that she is the destined victim of Menelaus' jealous rage. This signifies that the political jealousy of Greece destroyed its culture and its art. Though willing to die calmly, Helena does not disdain the proferred protection of a settlement of Northmen in the hills just north of Sparta, "made some twenty years ago", a hint that tells us exactly what is meant, for if we count back twenty years from 1808, when this scene was completed, we have the date of Goethe's return to Germany from Rome (1788) with all the wonderful results of that journey for him and for the culture of his country. Faust, the leader of this bold and venturous band, is praised by Phorkyas as of a gentler nature than the Greeks, which seems an allusion to the christian element in modern civilization, and his fortress-palace is made to typify Gothic art. To bring Helena to Faust's palace is to bring Greek ideals to Germany, while, of course, here as before, in the details there is much that may be explained in this way, or in that, or more wisely, sometimes, in no way at all.

For such a man as Goethe, to know Greek art was to make it a part, an inseparable part, of his artistic being; and Greek art found in him a protector who yet preserved

his German nature. And so in the drama Faust and Helena need for their union no long wooing, though in the brief play of its delicate fancies, Faust teaches her the unwonted German rhyme, into which the chorus falls a little later, after Faust has taken his bride to the peaceful retreat of Arcadia. Here a child is born to them, Euphorion, whom Goethe told Eckermann (December 20, 1829) was the personification of Poetry, who had appeared, also, as has been said, in another form in the First Act. But there is something in the manner of Goethe's announcement that suggests mystification, and it is very clear that at the close of his brief career, Euphorion is but a thin mask for Lord Byron.

All of what is said by and of Euphorion seems consistent with no interpretation that has yet been suggested by the commentators, but still the essential elements of the episode embody a profound æsthetic truth. Euphorion is introduced as a naked genius, without wings, faunlike but not animal, springing higher and higher from the ground, while his mother cautions him that he may leap but not fly, and, like Antæus, will gain strength by touching earth. The German Faust at first is less disturbed, than his Grecian spouse at these soaring leaps, but Euphorion's flight is ever wilder, more unrestrained, until at last he falls like Icarus, dead at his parents' feet, and disappears in light, leaving behind his mantle and lyre and calling on his mother to follow. The fire and throbbing energy of this scene are indescribable, and the threnody to Lord Byron with which the chorus bewails Euphorion's death is a sympathetic and discriminating tribute of exquisite beauty. Helena follows the summons of her son, and having embraced Faust, she vanishes, leaving her garment and veil in his arms. They dissolve into clouds, lift Faust, and bear him away.

Here the essential allegory seems to be that a perfect and fruitful union between modern and classic life is impossible. It produces an idealism that destroys itself because it is not in touch with the actualities of our life. Therefore Eu-

phorion perishes and therefore Helena must return to the shades. But she leaves behind her all that we can take up into our modern life of the classic ideals, the Garment, that is "love of beauty," especially in artistic form. Hence Phorkyas, falling a moment from Mephistopheles' rôle, bids Faust:

> Hold fast to what remains to thee of all,
> The garment! Leave it not; for demons pluck
> Already at its skirts, and to the underworld
> Would drag it gladly. Cling the faster to it.
>
>
>
> Above all commonplace it lifts thee up
> Upon the air, long as thou canst endure.

It is, then, through the Greek view of life that Faust is to gain the foundation for his future experience, and this foundation is to be a practical idealism. The influence of Helena on Faust is that he no longer gazes in the stars while his feet are in the mire. He will from this time look more about him than above him. He will still strive, but his activity will be in this world and for his fellow men.[1] It is not, then, merely æsthetic teaching that Helena has for Faust, but a profoundly ethical one, and one of sufficient importance to the drama to make the subordinate and introductory position of the First and Second Acts artistically justifiable. The Fourth Act, so far as it concerns the main theme, exists only to make the Fifth possible, and this in turn is only putting into action the ethics of the "Helena," which is thus the cardinal point of the whole. How this fact accounts for the long comparative neglect and present growing appreciation for the Second Part will appear presently.

The Fourth Act shows us Faust on a mountain, full of life and energy which draw their inspiration from classical memories. His ambition is now useful labor. He wishes to redeem broad tracts of land for settlement from the destroying ocean. That he may gain imperial aid and sanction in this project, Mephistopheles proposes that he

[1] Let him to whom this seems strange read what Goethe says to Eckermann on thoughts of immortality, Feb. 25, 1824.

should assist the emperor, now engaged in hopeless war with rebellious vassals. All this has no other dramaturgical purpose than to introduce the activities of the Fifth Act. It serves, however, as the vehicle of much political satire, of which the general tendency is that government should be left to those who make it their business to govern.[1] This act was the last written and shows clear traces of old age. It is incomplete also. The scene in which Faust receives the reward of his magical aid, in a cause for which, again, it is hard to feel much sympathy, was not written when Goethe sealed the manuscript in August, 1831.

The Fifth Act shows Faust's ambition in good part realized. He is now a century old.[2] He has compelled the evil spirits to his service, and trade and agriculture flourish in spite of their perversity. He is impatient of opposition, however, and has still to learn moderation in prosecuting a good cause. This lesson is taught him by Mephistopheles' officious murder of Baucis and Philemon, whose small possession was a thorn to his unsatiated desire. Once more that cynical spirit has "willed the ill and wrought the good." And now the end draws on. Want, Guilt, Need, and Care, approach his palace. Care alone can enter, and under her breath Faust grows blind, but she cannot touch him, although he refuses from henceforth magic aid. The four depart, but Death appears. Faust sees him not, but in his blindness he urges on his unselfish task, to provide dwellings which will prove for men a doubly precious possession, because they must be maintained by constant effort against the encroaching sea. He thinks he hears the busy spades of his laborers, but they are the Lemures who dig his grave. With the vision of his accomplished purpose before his sinking eyes, he enjoys even now, in anticipation, that highest moment in which he could say to the present:

[1] Compare Eckermann, March, 1832, toward the end of the second volume, where among much else in the same spirit, Goethe says: "I hate bungling like sin, especially bungling in politics, from which nothing but evil for thousands and millions can come."

[2] See Eckermann, June 6, 1831.

"Ah! linger still, thou art fair". And so he dies and is laid in the grave.

There follows a fantastic scene in which Mephistopheles and his attendant spirits endeavor to prevent the escape of the soul from Faust's body. This cynical degradation of the ideal is interrupted by a heavenly choir and a glory shining from above. For a time these strains of mystic beauty alternate with Mephistopheles' sensuous animalism. But the roses of penitence that the angels strew, burn and scatter the demons, and, in a moment when Mephistopheles is distracted by the sensuous charms of certain angel boys, Faust's soul escapes him. This scene is essentially operatic, and that which concludes the drama can hardly be conceived without a musical accompaniment. A chorus of blessed children and various typical figures of the mediæval church, the Ecstatic, the Profound, the Seraphic Father, here conceived as anchorites, sing celestial hymns. Then the "younger," and the "more perfect" angels take up the strain; and from the highest, purest, of the hermit cells, the "Marian Doctor" hails the advent of Mary, the Merciful, surrounded by her penitents.

By turns and together, the Woman who washed the Lord's feet with ointment, the Woman of Samaria and the Egyptian Mary beg the Blessed Virgin's pardon for "this good soul, that forgot itself but once, and thought not that it erred." And now first since the close of her tragic life, Gretchen appears and, in a stanza that suggests her impassioned prayer to the Blessed Virgin in the First Part (xviii.), she begs that Mary will bend her countenance graciously on her joy since "the early love brought to 'clearness' at last, returns again". "Grant me to teach him. The new day blinds him still". But Mary answers: "Rise to higher spheres. If he dimly apprehend you, he will follow". And the mystic chorus concludes with those well known words: "The eternal-womanly draws us upward and on".

In this gnomic saying we ought to find, if Goethe is serious with us, the key to all. What, then, is "eternally

womanly", and who are meant by "us", human beings, or men as distinct from women? Was it this "eternally womanly" that drew Gretchen upward, or was it not rather the eternal manly? This, at least, will afford us a clear interpretation to that last word of the mystical drama. If by "us" we understand "men", then the "eternal" essential element in women that draws "us" is "love," but this love is, in its essence, unselfish, altruistic, fruitful, and hence the teaching of the drama is here proclaimed to be that we rise, or are raised, by altruistic effort.[1]

As Scherer has observed,[2] Faust "chooses not wealth but work," and in that work finds his "salvation". To this choice he is brought, mediately by Gretchen, immediately by Helena, for beauty is positive, creative, and so here, as in life contrasted with the ugly, the evil, the negative, as it appears in Mephistopheles-Phorkyas. It is Helena that reveals to Faust the worth of life, of this life, and so frees him from the spirit that denies. Both pass from a sensitive, groping, contemplative, searching, æsthetic existence, under the spur of negative spirits and ideal models, to active, useful labor. In both Goethe puts unselfish activity above the claims of æsthetics or learning. He does not let his poe and actor, nor yet his groping student, find satisfaction. Het calls to them: "You must act, work". The greatest representative of German poetry, a many-sided and successful investigator, bows before practical life. He does not look longingly over into strange regions, conscious of his own weakness. No! He knows the practical world, has been of it, has worked successfully in it, and yet has left it. He recommends in his poem what he neglected in his life. Thus "Faust" expressed in a time that was poor in noble deeds the

[1] If love is selfish, the result, as Bleibtreu cynically says, is:

"Das Ewig-weibliche zieht uns herab
Und wird des männlichen Stolzes Grab."

[2] This paragraph is based throughout on, and in part translated from Scherer, Litteraturgeschichte, 719, seq., for I have not found it possible to state what I wished without seeming to borrow from him.

longing for heroic action. It echoed the protest of the statesman vom Stein against the excess of metaphysical speculation that had thinned the life-blood of Germany.

But already the tide had turned. The change that Goethe demanded, he lived to see in a fair way to be accomplished, and we have lived to see the real exalted above the ideal, action above thought, perhaps in undue measure. Hence the general popular comprehension of "Faust" as a whole in this period more than ever before, because more than ever before it reflects the popular mind to which as to Faust the "logos" is neither "word," nor "thought," nor "power" but "action."[1] The dangers of such a philosophy of life are obvious, some of them are already realized in the luxury of our hedonists and the socialism and nihilism of our proletariat, but "Faust," if rightly apprehended, offers two poisons, each an antidote of the other, which joined together help and strengthen. Neither Euphorion's idealism that will not touch earth, nor Mephistopheles' realism that will not rise above it, but that just mean, that idealizes the real and realizes the ideal, that is the world-wisdom of "Faust."

B. W. Wells.

[1] Part I. Sc. 3. Not *Wort*, nor *Sinn*, nor *Kraft*, but *That*.